

to return to public housing in the neighborhood when it becomes available, though they also have the option to

has lived in the building for 38 years. She said seeing the billboard every day brings back members of the p

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The skinny on the Calatrava

By HAYDN BUSH

Staff Writer

The proposed 115-story Fordham Spire may be tall, but it won't throw its weight around, Fordham Company Chairman Christopher Carley told the Grant Park Advisory Council Monday night. The building has been proposed for a 2.2 acre slice of land just north of the Chicago River and west of Lake Shore Drive.

"It's tall, slender, elegant and spectacular," Carley said.

Tall and narrow beats short and squat, developers say

The construction of the building would require a zoning variance, but Carley said the building is preferable to the construction of two shorter structures already allowed by zoning requirements.

"The story we tell is that we're building a building that's already consistent" with the current zoning, Carley said.

residence in the building as a second or third home, adding that the luxury hotel planned for the site would usually be around at 65 to 70 percent capacity. At peak rush hours, Carley noted that traffic from the Fordham Spire would only amount to a car a minute, and said if the developers instead pursued plans to build two mid-rise condo buildings, the traffic impact would be significantly greater.

Earlier this year, Fordham Company promised to donate roughly \$500,000 for the planned transformation of DuSable Park from a tiny plot of grass to a \$9 million park that would include a riverwalk, new wetlands and a multimedia center honoring Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, the city's first nonnative settler.

Grant Park Advisory Council President Bob O'Neill, also a member of the DuSable Park Steering Committee, lauded the ambitious Fordham Spire blueprints, saying the skinny building would leave a great deal of open space unused, and would create minimal shadows on DuSable Park and the surrounding area.

"This is a terrific solution," O'Neill said.

After Carley was finished, Sam Assefa, the recently appointed Deputy Commissioner of Urban Design and Planning for the city of Chicago, gave an unrelated presentation extolling the virtues of tall, slender structures.

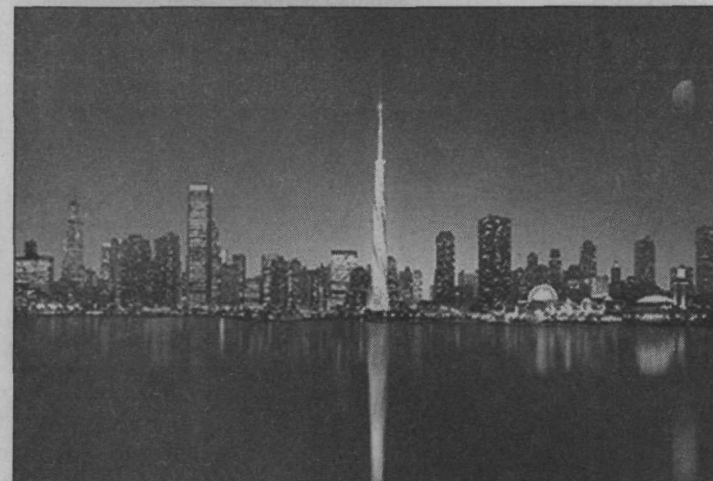
While Assefa did not comment on the proposed Fordham Spire, he said he supported the

construction of tall buildings that made a significant impact on a city's skyline without blocking views. In San Francisco, where Assefa worked as the city's Senior Urban Designer, he said 1980s zoning requirements that limited the height of downtown buildings resulted in a string of unherald-

ed, squat structures that did little to enhance the city's skyline.

In recent years, Assefa said, San Francisco moved away from that, and tried to encourage the development of taller buildings downtown.

"Tall is not a negative word anymore," Assefa said.



The developers of the ultra tall Fordham Spire say it's better than two squat buildings.

Carley said the site combines two existing parcels, one of which is zoned for an approximately 35-story building. The other would allow for a 55-story structure. Instead of building two squat, prosaic buildings that would cast a wide shadow on the surrounding area—including DuSable Park—Carley said the Fordham Company was looking for something that would immediately take center stage on the city's skyline.

Carley said the structure, which would include 75 condominiums and a 150-room hotel, would have a negligible impact on traffic in the surrounding area. The parcel is currently only accessible by a narrow access road that runs parallel to the Chicago River, and the building would require a connection to the Lake Shore Drive bridge.

But Carley said he believed most condo owners would buy a




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